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MENTAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

By James W. Ward.

At the age of five-and-twenty,
Golden age of trust and promise,
When the hopes of life are brightest,
And its cares and trials are hidden,
When the heart is strong and earnest,
And the natant love is kindling
That pure flame that burneth ever
While the oil of life endureth—
Then my honored father married
His beloved Evelina,
My true-hearted angel mother.

This was in the blooming spring-time,
In the month of flowers and sunshine;
Winter, with its frosts, had left them,
And the grasses in the meadow,
And the flowers upon the hill-side,
Springing up in life and beauty,
Filled the air with health and sweetness.
My mother then was just eighteen,
And beautiful, they said who knew her,
As any lily; not a blossom,
Sweetly nodding in the valley
Of the rippling Wiesibicon,
Turned its lovely face to heaven
With a purer glance or fairer;
And so my father saw and wooed her.
Then was fixed her lovely image
On his heart, as, fresh and youthful,
Warm with love's divine emotion,
Then she blushing smiled upon him;
And ever after, through all changes,
If he wake, or if he slumber,
Still that gentle face he seeth
As he saw it on that morning
Her sweet voice first called him husband.

Forty years of peaceful union,
Forty years of love and duty,
On their heads since then have ripened,
Hope, and trust, and joy maturing;
Till at last has come upon them
Age, or what in youth is called so;
Age, that unperceived approaches,
Making saddest alterations,
With its sombre lines and shadows,
In each slowly changing feature;
And my mother, bless her sweet face,
Kind and loving through all changes,
Is no more the radiant beauty
She was once; so time disposes
Of the youthful charms and graces
That enchain us and delight us.

Came the other day an artist,
With his camera and lenses,
With his chemicals and metals,
Copying faces with the sunlight;
And my mother sat before him,
And the beams that shone upon her,
From her pure face were reflected
To the plate prepared to fix them;
Accurately there imprinting
Every line, and shade, and feature,
Every dimple, every wrinkle;
The solicitude maternal,
That calm look of anxious yearning,
And the lips' matured expression,
And the sunk cheek's care-worn shadows—
All were truly represented,

Nothing changed, and naught omitted;
True as in the placid water
Was the image of Narcissus;
True as the answer of the mirror
To the face that looketh in it.
The artist spoke his approbation:
"Tis very good," he said, "and truthful;"
"Tis excellent," exclaimed the stranger;
"Tis mother," all the children echoed,
And I myself declared it perfect.

But my father, looking inward
On the past, in dreamy fondness,
Thoughtful gazed, in silent sadness,
Shook his head in disappointment,
Said at length, with strange assurance,
Tears upon his eyelids glistening—
"Tis not her; not so I see her,
Not thus through years of bliss have known her;
Not thus appears my Evelina,
Still to me as fair and blooming,
As when first her love she gave me.
She in youth I loved and wedded
Looks not thus to me, has never
Shown these sad and life-worn features:
Or the dreamy past has mocked me,
Or my memory is failing,
Or my sight is dim and treacherous,
Or these tears obscure my vision,
Or the likeness is defective;
But I cannot in the picture
See the face, to me so different,
Of my wife, my life's companion;
Tis not thus to me she looketh."

"Tis a mystery needs solution;
Who will help me to an answer?
Why is it, my aged father,
All his mental strength possessing,
Clear in head, and keen of vision,
Cannot see his wife grow older—
Sees her still as when he won her
In her maiden beauty blushing?
Shall we say the heart receiveth,
In its youth, ere time has scarred it,
Its supreme and deep impressions,
Like the sensitive, quick metal
Of the camera, and retaineth
Them indelibly, forever?

FIDDLING FOR THE DEAD.

A Tale of Three Nights' Experience.

SEVERAL years ago, circumstances connected with my art led me to Naples. After working hard, and winning some sort of reputation as a violinist in my own country, I determined on giving a series of concerts in the principal cities of the continent, in the hope—I think not an unlaudable one—of upholding English music, and at the same time filling my own pocket. The experiment proved highly satisfactory; and with the exception of a few hostile criticisms, I must honestly confess I met with quite as much success

as I deserved. At Naples, the appointment of solo-player at the opera was offered me, and although the emolument attached to the office was not very high, I gladly accepted it, in order to enjoy the delights of a southern winter, and at the same time devote myself to theoretical studies, under the genial influence of the siren Parthenope. We fiddlers require, every now and then, a few months' pause and abstraction from the too mercenary professional life of Paris and London, otherwise our enthusiasm is apt to cool, and we come to look upon our once-loved art as no longer a mistress to be worshipped, but a trade to make money by. The appointment gave me occupation, but at the same time left abundant leisure to prosecute my other studies, and I was perfectly contented with my lot. The climate and scenery are alone an intoxication, while the magnificent Toledo, with its perpetual fair, the stately palaces of the Chiaja, or, better still, the unrivalled bay, prohibit all ennui. To live in this "piece of heaven fallen on the earth," as the Neapolitan calls his country, is a positive pleasure; as the eye rests upon the luxuriant gardens around, or catches the sparkling foam of that delicious sea, with Capri and Ischia in the distance, we no longer wonder at the indolent, pleasure-seeking nature of the people. Like a gentle opiate, lulling the sense of bodily pain, a divine repose steals over the fretted nerves and heated brain in this "delicious land of lavish lights and floating shade;" and to the musician, living for the most part a highly artificial life, amidst the feverish excitements of perpetual emulation, the lotus gift comes with a double welcome. Yielding entirely to the surrounding influences, I shunned society as much as possible, and lived alone—alone with my loved Guernarius, best and most cherished of friends. In solitary rambles through the picturesque streets, an occasional sail to one of the small islands of Lazaretto and Nisida, or a stroll to the environs, the weeks passed by in delightful succession, literally embarrassed with the riches of nature and art. Nursed in solitude, my ideas grew apace; sheet after sheet of paper became crowded with a series of hieroglyphics, unintelligible to any but a very practised eye; and I had already planned, and even partly executed, a work of a more ambitious character than any I had hitherto attempted. This work, on which I intended to rest my reputation as

a composer, now absorbed my whole attention, and in order to avoid every possible distraction, I raised my fees to such an amount as would leave me undisturbed by concert-givers. The pay of my appointment amply covered my expenses, and, for a few months at least, I resolved to live in retirement. To announce publicly that I declined to accept any engagements, would have been an insult to those who had so kindly welcomed me; besides, I was "only a fiddler," and had to live by my art, and was, moreover, satisfied with my condition. My only object was to gain a short respite from the excitement of solo-playing, and to give my fingers a holiday, not for a moment to abandon a profession which I had chosen in opposition to the counsels of my best friends, but which, with all its drawbacks, is the only one that would ever have satisfied the aspirations of my heart. The ruse answered perfectly, for in a land where instrumental performers are proverbially ill paid, ten louis appeared an exorbitant honorarium. So I lived in peace, fulfilling my allotted task, occasionally giving my services gratuitously, when the object was one of charity, but otherwise eschewing public life. A quartette of Beethoven's was the only temptation to which I yielded; and these glorious works never revealed their wondrous wealth of harmony to my ears so fully, as performed in my "parlor near the sky," overlooking the azure sea.

One morning, toward the end of March, as I was sitting alone, smoking, and correcting the score of my new work, the door suddenly opened, and a foreign-looking footman entered the room with a note from his master, Prince Paul —, a Russian nobleman, then living in Naples. To my infinite surprise, the note contained a request that I would spend the following evening at his palazzo, and bring some music. Of course there could be no objection on my part to accept the engagement, and I therefore presented myself at the appointed time and place, with my fiddle-case under my arm.

The palazzo was one of those noble mansions situated on the Chiaja; and I was ushered by the chamberlain through a magnificent hall into an elegantly furnished ante-room, where tea, coffee, &c., were liberally supplied. After duly disposing of my burden on an ottoman, I accepted a cup of the fragrant souchong, sank in an arm-chair, and began to make

a survey of the apartment. Two or three servants dressed in black performed the duties of the tea-table to admiration, and the chamberlain was the very perfection of one of those now nearly obsolete functionaries. But what struck me as very strange, was, that I should be the only guest, and that no sounds of footsteps or voices should be heard. At length, growing impatient of the delay, I asked my cicerone for an explanation of this apparent anomaly; but the only reply that I got was to the effect that monseigneur would wish to see me immediately; so I took up my instrument, tuned the strings, and then quietly awaited the momentous summons. Presently the door was thrown open, and I was informed that the prince was ready; so I rose and followed my serious guide through a suit of apartments to the saloon where the great man and his friends were assembled. On my entrance, he advanced and welcomed me in tones of the most bland politeness; then, after a few commonplace, he said he should be delighted to hear me play. I bowed, and commenced a piece of my own composition, founded on a popular Neapolitan fisherman's song. I had purposely selected this for what dramatists call *le lever du rideau*, from the fact of its possessing a certain degree of sprightliness, calculated to arrest the listener's ear, and thus produce a favorable reception for my more elaborate performance. It also gave me time to study my audience and the acoustic qualities of the room, which was of considerable size, but so dimly lighted that its proportions were not easily definable. A few wax candles, burning in silver stands, interspersed up and down, shed so feeble an illumination on the surrounding objects, that it served but to increase the gloom.

The company consisted of some twenty or thirty individuals, who preserved the most icy frigidity of manner. One lady, dressed in blue satin, with a jasmine flower in her hair, was beautiful as a Grecian statue, but, alas! as cold. Another of the guests seemed plunged in deep thought, for his head never once moved from its recumbent position during my performance. Two or three of the gentlemen were dressed in uniform, and, to judge from the stars and ribbons which adorned their breasts, must have been men of considerable distinction. Among the gentle sex I remarked a few pretty girls clustered together in one corner,

while an elderly lady, in black velvet and ostrich plumes, seated near, surveyed the group with a smile of benevolent approval. One couple, consisting of an old gentleman and lady, who, to judge by their silver locks and venerable forms, must have long passed the term of life allotted by the psalmist, sat in close proximity to their host, and were evidently the patriarchs of the party. The rest I could not see, with the exception of a dark-complexioned man of about thirty-five, who fixed upon me a steady, glassy eye. There was a wild, haggard expression about that man's face that I did not like; and whenever I looked in his direction I met the same fixed stare, until it became an insult; but as if to make amends for this, a comely-looking dame, seated by his side, rewarded my exertions with a very kindly, good-humored smile.

There was an air of *bienséance* pervading the assembly; but, at the same time, I had never in my whole experience found the Horatian axiom of *nil admirari* pushed to the same extent; and when I brought my solo to a close, not a single expression of satisfaction greeted my labors. I ought, by the way, to except the prince, who was pleased to express himself in flattering terms of my artistic endowments. Two footmen now brought on silver trays a slight repast, composed of ices, oregat, and Venetian confectionary. While this part of the ceremony was being enacted, and I was duly refreshing myself with an ice, such as Italy, alone can produce, Prince Paul came up and began to chat about the rival schools of music in Germany and Italy, in a way that showed considerable knowledge of the subject. There was in the old gentleman's manner a benevolence and regard to the feelings of others, combined with a general warmth of expression, strangely opposed to the chilling indifference displayed by his guests.

After a sufficient pause, I resumed my instrument, and this time selected Prume's delicious *pastorale La Mélancolie*, thinking that this might be more in harmony with the feelings of my audience. But it was all one; not an emotion was stirred by the most touching tones of that expressive melody, or the admirable variations which succeeded it. The dark eyes still glared at me wildly—the comely dowager smiled good-humoredly as before—the generals evinced no symptoms of a surrender of their stoicism—the group of fair girls,

with their *chaperonné*, preserved the utmost composure—and *she* with the divine face and the jasmine flower! no trace, not even the faintest gleam of susceptibility dwelt on that adorable countenance. I could have borne all but this. Had one smile of approbation from those lovely lips rewarded my endeavors, I should have been content. But this indifference was dreadful. Was it possible that a being so thoroughly beautiful could be deprived of all sensibility to the poetry of sound? It could not be; no, I had failed in calling forth those emotions of the soul so obedient to the summons of the inspired musician. My wand was evidently impotent, and I became piqued and discontented. At length, after playing a mournful sweeping movement toward the close, without the slightest effect, I suddenly broke off, and in a fit of desperation dashed into the *Carnaval de Venise*. It was a last resource, and I resolutely determined on rousing this apathetic assemblage, at the sacrifice even of my own reputation. The most *outré* and extravagant variations—the most ludicrous sounds I could devise—altercations between the old man and woman, followed by tumbling down stairs of the former, while hotly pursued by his better-half; Paganini's most grotesque movements, rendered grotesquer and absurd still—followed by the clucking of hens, crowing of cocks, the bleating of lambs, the grunting of pigs—the various sounds of a farm-yard, delightfully interspersed with the mewing of cats, and the lowing of an old cow, being the veritable song of which that ancient female died: all these, and more, were recklessly thrown in, without the slightest regard to anything but the desired object of rousing my audience. Caring for nothing else, I fixed my eyes on the Madonna-like head, and watched intently her face. With the electric thread which seems to connect the musician and his listener, I was ready to catch the faintest expression of her features, to seize the slightest and most airy fancy of her brain, and transfer it to my strings. Alas, alas! all was fruitless; and after some of the maddest and most insane sounds ever emitted from a fiddle, I sank thoroughly exhausted into a spacious arm-chair, and buried my face in my hands.

The prince now approached and thanked me warmly for my services, at the same time expressing the gratification I had afforded him by what he was pleased to

term my wonderful execution and originality of genius. There was a dignity and grand-seignior air about the old nobleman which prevented my laughing bitterly at this dubious compliment to my charlatanism; but I saw at a glance that he meant no insult, and therefore contented myself with a formal bow. Soon afterward, the chamberlain entered the salon; monseigneur politely wished me good-night, and my guide conducted me through the long suite of dimly-lighted apartments to the hall. Just as I was leaving, I cast a glance behind: the divine head was pensive as ever—the dark eyes still glared—the good-natured dowager smiled—the warriors preserved their usual taciturnity, and the group of girls still lingered in the same corner. I felt I had produced no impression—that I had, moreover, made a fool of myself, and that the sooner I left the place, the better. Stung to the quick with mortification, I pushed brusquely past the attendants, and declining the proffered carriage, rushed into the street, glad to escape from this mansion of the dead.

The following morning I received a complimentary note, containing a cheque for ten louis, and expressing a wish to see me again in the course of the ensuing week. Now, as I said before, I am “only a fiddler,” and have to live by my art; consequently, I again accepted the invitation, and drew out a programme of strictly classical music, thinking that my previous selection had probably not been to the taste of the listeners. I should not omit to mention that I was on each occasion provided with a *pianiste accompagnateur*.

The same stillness pervaded the mansion as before, the same ceremony, the same dimly-lighted apartments, and, so far as I could perceive, the same guests. I played with care, for the idea had seized my mind that these silent persons were fastidious critics of music, and had probably not relished my extravagances of last week. I was, therefore, doubly scrupulous, and rendered with the utmost accuracy in my power Mendelssohn's magnificent concerto, which was my *pièce de résistance*. But I again had the mortification of closing without a murmur of that sweet music of applause which is to the executive artist as the breath of life. The exquisite beauty of the lady with the jasmine flower, faintly seen through the prevailing gloom, the soft pensiveness of that

countenance, in whose features were blended Athenian grace with the Madonna inspiration, stole into my heart and disturbed its usual placidity; for, recollect, oh! reader, that I was in the land of Romeo and Juliet. As usual, the prince congratulated me on my performance, and the chamberlain conducted me to the door. The ten louis were duly forwarded, and I endeavored to dismiss the subject from my mind; but in dreams there would arise the figure of a beautiful lady beckoning me to celestial bowers, and in the daytime my mind was haunted by her image. I became restless and moody; found myself, without any what lawyers call *malice prepense*, walking up and down in front of the palazzo, gazing at the windows, in the hope of catching a glimpse of the divine occupant. In fact, I began to evince all the symptoms of a man hopelessly and irretrievably in love. Laugh not, good friends, at my plight, for it was a sorry one. You who are rich and well born, can afford to love; the fair and the young smilingly strew the path to the citadel of their hearts with rose-leaves. And you again, respected Jones, who don't exactly belong to the *crème de la crème*, can yet afford to love, and rear up a brood of sturdy little Joneses; but the poor artist, who is neither rich, nor high-born, nor respectable—the Bohemian of society, the diverting vagabond, whose only mission is to mitigate the ennui of listless lords and ladies—what business has he to love, save some rouged and spangled beauty of his own gypsy clan! It is true, he is admitted into the familiarity of the great; he is lionized, and, it may be, flattered by beautiful women; often, too, he is the recipient of the most delicate confidences—yet woe betide him should he for a moment forget his exact position, and lift his eyes to the fair forms around him with any other than the coldest and most deferential gaze. Yet it is hard to do this at all times—hard, with your susceptible, nervous organization, to case your heart in steel, and successfully resist the blandishments of beauty and refinement. I was fully aware of all this, and that my growing passion was the direst insanity; everything—my position in life—the utter indifference displayed by the object of all this delirium—went to prove the fact. Still the impossibility, the coldness, the mystery, only served to add fuel to my raging love, and I was living in a sort of fever. For a time I did nothing but draw

figures of melancholy ladies with flowers in their hair, write doggerel sonnets to Beatrice—I had ascertained her name—wherein the moon, and the stars, and the sea largely figured, and the word love generally rhymed to grove. During the height of this madness, I arose one night from my sleepless couch, stifled and restless; I threw open the window; the gentle breeze from the sea, bearing on its wings the voices of fishermen in the bay, mingled with the occasional laughter of a group of lazzaroni, listening to the recital of some drollery; the drowsy hum of the sleeping city, and the murmur of the waves, added to the picturesque sounds which in Naples never cease day or night—all tended to compose my mind. I drew on my dressing-gown and slippers, lighted my meerschau, and sat by the window, inhaling rich draughts of the cool and grateful air.

Presently, I seized pen and paper, and began to write. The confused ideas and passionate ravings of my heart now found a vent, and poured themselves forth in musical forms. Without premeditation or design, my composition took a shape, into which I most happily threw those wild aspirations which, through ignorance of the medium, had been simply ridiculous abortions on the uncouth canvas and doggerel verse. So thoroughly became I absorbed in my occupation, that I was bewildered when Giulia, the pretty serving-maid, gently tapped at my door to announce the arrival of my matutinal roll and coffee. I looked around; the lamp still feebly flickered against the now almost brilliant sunlight; a mass of paper lay scattered on the floor, and the ashes of the pipe had fallen on my tattered *robe de chambre*, and curiously perforated that venerable garment. I hastily gathered the manuscript together, extinguished the lamp, admitted the astonished Giulia, discussed my breakfast, and then resumed my work. By noon it was finished, and finished to my satisfaction. I entitled it *A Dream of Love*. The same evening I was again engaged at the palazzo, and went this time triumphantly armed with my new composition, which I had dedicated to "The Unknown Lady." She was, as usual, just visible through the perpetual twilight which reigned in this abode, with the same placid expression of goodness in her divinely beautiful face. The swarthy stranger was also there, and his eyes rested on me as wildly as ever; the

good-humored dowager was good-humored still; the girls, fair as a group of sea-nymphs, appeared, like those wayward beings, devoid of human souls; for they were utterly unimpressible. The other ladies and gentlemen maintained their usual frigid demeanor. I played a romance of Beethoven's; Ernst's *Elégie*, then just published; a selection of the *Lieder ohne Worten*; and then my own *Dream of Love*. Up to this time I had evidently made no way; my audience was unmoved, and I began to feel nervous, for I had staked all my hopes on the success of this last composition. At length I commenced, and gazing on the being of my idolatry, drank inspiration from that queenly brow. The tender strain proceeded, coy and gentle as a bashful lover's vows; then gradually warming instinctively it became hurried, uncertain, fierce, and strong, until, reaching the climax of frenzy, its passion exploded in a wild burst, and then, in broken sobs, and scarcely articulate sighs, it slowly died away in silence.

I fixed my straining eyeballs on the unknown lady, and sought to dive into the secret recesses of her soul. With a throbbing heart and fevered brow, I threw into the music all the fire which tormented my breast. The violin was no longer a mere musical instrument, but rather a human soul pouring forth the wailing melodies of "some divine despair," whose piteous accents must touch the coldest heart. Alas! it touched not hers. The dark eyes glared fiercely; the dowager relaxed not a muscle of that stereotyped smile: that detested smile nearly drove me mad. The maidens were passive as usual; and the heroes sat stolid as blocks of stone. I felt my head turning, and in a paroxysm of agony at the ruin of all my hopes, I flung aside my instrument, and utterly reckless of consequences, threw myself at the feet of the lady, and wildly seized her arm, when—O that the earth had opened to receive me and hide my shame!—the exquisite member crumbled into dust, and she, the madly-worshipped queen of my soul, toppled over from her seat, and with a fearful crash, fell to the ground, dashed into a hundred fragments. . . . I recollect nothing further of what occurred; but when I regained my senses I was at home, attended by a careful nurse and the ever-watchful Giulia. For some days I did not allude to any subject of an exciting nature; but when my constitution

had finally triumphed, and I was one evening sitting on the balcony, still weak, but rapidly recovering, the honest girl put a letter into my hand which she had orders to deliver to me as soon as the physician would allow. I broke the seal, and read as follows:

"SIR: Your rash conduct has been cruelly punished, and I feel it has now become my duty to remove the mystery which has so painfully affected you. I am an old man, and have survived most of my contemporaries; consequently, I live chiefly in the past, amidst departed friends and bygone memories. For years I have existed in this manner, alone, and yet surrounded by the dear familiar faces of those I loved best on earth. As each cherished friend died, I called into requisition the skill of the modeller, and in wax, clothed in their usual dress, wearing their usual expression; I have thus preserved my household gods around me. Remembering their various tastes, I procure those amusements to which they were most addicted, and for this purpose I secured your ability. In these scenes I live again, and the pleasures of memory crowd my brain. In fact, I have few other resources of joy left than those which lie embalmed in the past. Those figures you saw in the dim light are the exact—exact, yet, alas! how different, representations of my departed friends and relatives; and the lady dressed in blue satin was my only daughter—good and pure as an angel. Ah! the wound is re-opened. Adieu for ever.

"PRINCE PAUL. —."

Inclosed was a cheque for fifty louis, and a ring containing a lock of raven hair, set in diamonds. At first I was furious. I resolved to return, with bitter reproaches, these hated *cadeaux*; but the prince was gone, no one knew whither. Thus baffled, I tore up into a thousand shreds my nocturno, drawings, sonnets, etc. I was covered with confusion and shame. To have thus madly loved a wax figure! All Naples would be pelting with ridicule the luckless foreign fiddler. I must instantly leave the accursed place, and once more plunge into the active scenes of daily life. Fortunately, however, I found my adventure was not known; so I quietly resigned my appointment, and bade farewell to Naples—a city I have never revisited.

Many years have elapsed, and in the varied scenes of a busy professional life,

the above circumstances had nearly faded away from my memory, when, to my astonishment, one morning, not long ago, I received a small parcel from abroad, containing the miniature portrait of a beautiful girl, exquisitely painted. A letter accompanied this gift, wherein I was officially informed, that by the will of the late Prince Paul —, recently deceased, at an advanced age, in Moscow, I became entitled to this portrait, together with some manuscript music, and a small sum of money. The music I found to be no other than my forgotten *Dream*, which had been left in the Palazzo on the night of that dire confusion. Lost in amazement, I gazed at the well-remembered features until my mind dreamily wandered back through the long years to the sombre mansion, the eccentric old nobleman, the silent party, and my astounding *affair de cœur* on the Chiaja.

INTERESTING REMINISCENCES OF BENJAMIN WEST.

IN the *Daily Express*, of Lancaster, Penn. (February 9th, 1860), we find some very interesting statements in regard to the early life and works of Benjamin West. The information is new to us, and we suppose will be so to most of our readers. We therefore reproduce the article—with the greater pleasure since the personalities and specification of labors have a general as well as a local interest. The *Express* says:

"Mr. T. W. Mayhew, of this city, has just published the most beautiful and impressive illustration of the most interesting and important event in sacred or profane history, that it has ever been our pleasure to examine. It is a large chromo-lithograph of the scene of 'Our Glorious Redeemer going to Mount Calvary to be Crucified,' copied from the original pen-drawing of the celebrated Benjamin West, whose fame as an artist belongs to history and the world; but of whom Lancaster city can boast as at one time one of her most admired citizens. The sketch is descriptive of that impressive scene near the close of the sufferings of the Son of Man, recorded by St. Luke, when, 'as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid

the cross, that he might bear it for Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.'

* * * *

"The pen-sketch from which this picture is copied was never painted by West, and this is, therefore, its first presentation to the public. It was so finely executed that one of the most celebrated mezzotint engravers of Philadelphia looked at it for nearly two hours before he could satisfy himself whether it was a pen-sketch or a steel line-engraving. Its history possesses a peculiar local interest. Benjamin West was born in Chester county in 1738, at West Dale, about ten miles southwest of Philadelphia, where the family mansion is still standing. He displayed at a very early age the genius for painting which afterward distinguished him—sketching, when only seven years old, with red and black ink, a correct likeness of his sister's child as it lay asleep in the cradle. The first colors he used were obtained from a strolling party of Indians, and he made his brushes from the fur of a cat, which he drew tightly through a quill. He was soon furnished with colors and brushes by a friend from Philadelphia, and West, sixty years afterward, said of the first effort he executed with these, that 'there were inventive touches of art in this, his first juvenile essay, which, with all his subsequent knowledge and experience, he had not been able to surpass.' Soon after this young West visited Lancaster, and here he formed the acquaintance of his friend and benefactor, Wm. Henry, Esq., who soon saw extraordinary genius struggling for development in the young man, and took him to his house, and gave him every encouragement, by furnishing him with the materials required by an artist.

"At this time West was requested to paint the likeness of Mrs. Ross, who was greatly admired for her beauty. Such was the success with which he executed this task, *his first portrait*, that the sphere of his celebrity was greatly enlarged; and so numerous were the applications for portraits, that it was with difficulty he could find time to satisfy the demands of his admirers. This first portrait on canvas, four feet square, is still in this city, and adorns the parlor of the granddaughter of Mrs. Ross, by whom it is highly prized. He also painted his first land-

scape for Mr. Henry, which was, indeed, his first regular painting. In 1750, Mr. Henry suggested to the artist that he should not waste his time on portraits, but devote himself to historical subjects; and he mentioned the 'Death of Socrates' as affording one of the best topics for illustrating the moral effect of the art of painting. The Painter knew nothing of the Philosopher; and upon confessing his ignorance, Mr. Henry went to his library, and taking down a volume of the English translation of Plutarch, read to him the account given by that writer of this affecting story. West said he would be happy to undertake the task, but, having hitherto painted only faces and men clothed, he should be unable to do justice to the figure of the slave who presented the poison, and which he thought ought to be nude. Henry had among his workmen a very handsome young man, and, without waiting to answer the objection, sent for him. On his entrance into the room he pointed him out to West, and said, 'There is your model!' And this instruction at once convinced the artist that he had only to look into nature for his models. The 'Death of Socrates' was furnished, and the fame of the artist was from that time established. And thus did the taste, intelligence and generosity of the citizens of Lancaster secure the *First Portrait*, the *First Landscape*, and the *First Historical Production* of West.

"After the death of Benjamin West, Henry, son of the artist's benefactor, Mr. Peale purchased the 'Death of Socrates,' for his gallery in Philadelphia, but the widow declined to part with the Landscape painting during her life. She died in 1855, when Recorder J. F. Reigart was so fortunate as to secure it, and it still remains in Lancaster, where it should be sacredly preserved as a reminiscence of one whom it is no mean honor for old Lancaster to have claimed as one of her citizens. The pen-sketch, the chromo-lithograph of which has prompted this notice, came into Mr. Reigart's possession at the same time. It had been forwarded by Mr. West from London, to his old friend and benefactor, in whose family it was carefully preserved, with other reminiscences of the family association with the immortal West—

"Who, with his own great soul, the canvas warms,
Creates, inspires, impassions human forms,
Spurns critic rules, and seizing safe the heart,
Breaks down the former frightful bounds of Art,
Where ancient manners, with exclusive reign,